



Jessie Appleby <jessie.appleby@fire.org>

Letter from the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, February 4, 2026

Richmond, Collin Frederick <cfrichmo@uillinois.edu>

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To: Jessie Appleby <jessie.appleby@fire.org>, Illinois Chancellor <chancellor@uillinois.edu>, "Guerra Perez, Gioconda" <gguerra@uillinois.edu>, SFcases <sfcases@thefire.org>

Dear Ms. Appleby,

Thank you for your February 4, 2026 letter concerning the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's public statement about a social media post by the Illini Republicans. In that statement, the University acknowledged both our responsibilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the protections afforded by the First Amendment. We appreciate the opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to both.

The University's Title VI Office received multiple reports concerning the posting and, as required by federal law, initiated its standard review process. That process is non-punitive and is designed to ensure that the University responds appropriately when concerns are raised. Our obligations under Title VI and the First Amendment are not mutually exclusive. The University must, and does, comply with both. The Title VI Office's established protocols therefore incorporate First Amendment principles and operate with the understanding that the University cannot discipline student organizations for protected expression.

Consistent with these obligations, publicly acknowledging that a Title VI review is underway, and clarifying that the University may not discipline a student organization for speech that is constitutionally protected, does not create a credible threat to such expression or an objectively reasonable chilling effect. Rather, it reflects the University's duty to respond to reports while honoring the constitutional limits on institutional action.

As with all matters, the University remains committed to advancing both free expression and federal civil rights compliance, recognizing that our responsibilities in these areas work together to guide our response.

Best,

COLLIN RICHMOND

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